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WASHINGTON TIMES
17 December 1985

BOOK REVIEW/ Arnold Beichman

Biographical study of U.S. intelligence

Walter Laqueur, a prolific writer and historian, has produced a book of major importance. His *A World of Secrets* is a biography of the Central Intelligence Agency, but it is more than that, too — far more.

In the almost four-decade history of the CIA, there have been 13 CIA directors, or a change of leadership about every three years. Between 1973 and 1981 alone, the CIA revolving door expelled four CIA directors and welcomed a fifth, the seemingly immovable William Casey.

It is no wonder, then, that CIA career personnel have always dominated the intelligence agency except, perhaps, during the eight Eisenhower years when Allen Dulles ran it. It was then that he dreamed up the ill-fated invasion of Cuba, which foundered with the accession of President Kennedy who had neither the wit to call off the invasion nor the courage to pursue it.

Mr. Laqueur's book also is about the crisis of intelligence in the United States. It is about the limitations of intelligence and how other foreign intelligence agencies stack up against the CIA. (Only the Israeli intelligence system, among the friendlies, seems to be better than that of the United States, which is natural since Israel probably couldn't afford another intelligence failure like the Yom Kippur War.)

The crisis of intelligence in the United States is simply the result of trying to function as effectively against the Soviet Union's intelligence community — primarily, the KGB, and the military GRU — as the Soviet agencies successfully function against the democracies.

The real crisis of the CIA has a lot to do with the kind of people recruited to serve as intelligence operators and intelligence analysts. True, there were serious attacks in the mid-1970s by Congress against the entire intelligence machinery.

True, there have been successful penetrations of the CIA itself against men such as James J. Angleton, whose counter-intelligence expertise was rooted out of the agency by onetime CIA Director William Colby, leaving the CIA virtually defenseless against enemy penetration. (In a technical sense, the crisis of intelligence is the crisis of counter-intelligence, something that Mr. Laqueur unfortunately fails to deal with.)

In the largest sense, the failures of the CIA that Mr. Laqueur documents in great detail — missing the overthrow of Makarios on Cyprus and the subsequent Turkish invasion, the Soviet buildup in Cuba during 1979, the imminent fall of the Shah of Iran, the ouster of Idi Amin, the 1981 Jaruzelski coup in Poland, India's explosion of a nuclear device, the 1950 war in Korea, the 1968 Soviet aggression against Czechoslovakia; underestimating Soviet arms expenditures and Soviet scientific abilities — are in my opinion due to the kind of people who have been recruited into CIA service, certainly in the pre-Casey years.

There is the case of Tom Braden, now a syndicated columnist but who held an important CIA post running covert activities. It was he who opened the Pandora's box about the CIA with a magazine article titled, "I'm Glad the CIA is Immoral." A few years later, he called for abolition of the CIA. Mr. Braden gave names and places of secret operations he had engineered.

There is the present case of Avis Boutell, a CIA analyst, whose review article in a CIA magazine on Soviet disinformation was so pro-Soviet that Sen. Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina, has written a letter to President Reagan inquiring about this and other problems with the present CIA.

Is intelligence worth the billions of dollars spent on the various agencies? Says Mr. Laqueur:

"Yet while intelligence operations are extraordinary in their comprehensiveness, timeliness, and scope, they are incapable of producing much of the information needed to form political judgment about what is going on in the world and how to relate to it."

In other words, while our technical collection capabilities are superb, there is an extraordinary weakness in political intelligence. And it is political intelligence which matters most. However, Mr. Laqueur offers an out. He describes approvingly John McCone, President Kennedy's appointee to succeed Mr. Dulles, as "not a Soviet expert, but he followed the useful rule that, when in doubt, one should suspect Soviet intentions." McCone's Law might be assimilated by President Reagan's advisers in the State Department.

The Laqueur volume is a Twentieth Century Fund book, which means one produced by a committee. That may account for some spelling errors (such as "John" for Joseph Lelyveld, *The New York Times* correspondent) and a bit of stodgy writing in the opening chapters. But Mr. Laqueur is too good a craftsman to allow himself to be hampered by a committee. The result is an excellent work of research and thought. It is a book that anyone even slightly interested in intelligence will read with just as much profit as will the intelligence professional.

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